



PRINTERS NEWS

FREE INKJET RECYCLING

Dell and HP are offering free recycling schemes for their inkjet cartridges. Both companies will provide new cartridges with a pre-paid envelope, so you can send your old cartridge directly to the recycling centre.

Dell's cartridges are handled in the UK before being sent to Germany. HP's are sent directly to France using airmail; we're not sure this is the most environmentally friendly way. For details of supported printers, visit Dell at www.dell.co.uk/recycling and HP at www.hp.com/eur/easyrecycling.



▲ Dell and HP are offering easy recycling of inkjet cartridges

BROTHER PRESENTS WORLD'S FASTEST INKJET

Brother has demonstrated the prototype of what it calls the world's fastest inkjet printer. The printer can print 170 pages in a minute, thanks to its 600x600dpi Piezo Inkjet Line Head. The Piezo is static and the paper moves unlike standard inkjets. Each colour has a separate A6 print head, which stretches across the width of the paper; for A4, two heads are strung together. There is less movement so the technology uses less power, around seven per cent of that required by conventional inkjets. Brother has not said when the technology will go into production and has hinted that it is seeking a partner to contribute further funding.

REVIEW COLOUR LASER PRINTER

EPSON AcuLaser C2600N

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £538 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.epson.co.uk

Epson describes its AcuLaser 2600N as a convertible laser printer. Though it's a four-pass device, it has a black-only mode where its cyan, magenta and yellow toners can be removed or even replaced with additional black supplies. If there is black toner in all four slots, the printer can produce 20,000 pages without re-stocking.

Four-pass print engines create full-colour pages by separately printing overlapping black, cyan, magenta and yellow images. Though they print colour slowly they tend to print mono pages fast. Because of its highly specified engine, the C2600N can print a speedy 30 black pages per minute (ppm).

The AcuLaser is smaller than its huge box suggests. Setting it up entails removing some tape, locking the photoconductor into place and inserting each toner. Unusually, this is done lengthways from the side of the printer's carousel.

Four-pass printers often make a lot of noise when rotating their carousel, but this printer is less clunky than most we have tested. Its range of standard emulations includes PCL6 and PostScript 3. Standard paper handling comprises a 500-sheet cassette and a 150-sheet multipurpose tray. The driver has no specific envelope paper type and the AcuLaser crumpled and curled our test sheets.

Tested over its network interface, the C2600N performed quickly in mono, printing our 50-page document at 26.6ppm. The shorter spool time of our 50-page letter test meant that it achieved a credible 27.5ppm. The first page printed in 11.5



seconds, but waking the printer from sleep mode added a minute to this time.

The AcuLaser is a bit slower than its single-pass competitors when printing in colour. It managed 6.9ppm printing our 24-page test document, but the Konica Minolta 5430DL reviewed in our *Labs* round-up of colour laser printers in *Shopper* February 2005 managed 15ppm in the same test.

Text quality and colour graphics were OK, but we found the driver reluctant to print at 600dpi unless selected manually. Graphics were great at the higher resolution and photos were exceptional, with accurate colours and excellent detail.

The C2600N offers a low mono cost of 1.25p per page, plus a high mono speed and large black toner capacity. It is an effective, if expensive, workgroup mono laser. It is also a very capable colour device. However, for heavy colour workloads we recommend a single-pass printer.

Simon Handby



Fast mono speed; high print quality; robust duty cycle



Slow to warm up; crumples envelopes

SPECIFICATIONS Colour laser, 600dpi, 30ppm mono/7.5ppm colour maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed, parallel and 10/100 Ethernet interfaces. Part code C11C585001BZ

HOTLIST LASER PRINTER

SAMSUNG ML-2250

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £99 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk



Samsung's ML-2250 takes a single 5,000-page-rated consumable, which is enough for 10 reams of paper; each sheet costing 1.33p to print. Print quality is excellent. This printer has 16MB of memory and a 250-sheet input cassette, so it's well specified. You can also upgrade the memory and add networking. This is a great-value printer.



SPECIFICATIONS Mono laser, 1,200dpi, 20ppm maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface. Part code ML-2250/XEU

HOTLIST COLOUR LASER PRINTER

EPSON AcuLaser C1100

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £229 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.uk

DETAILS www.epson.co.uk



Epson's C1100 is reasonably large for a four-pass colour laser and it's more tricky than many to set up. In our tests it came commendably close to Epson's claimed speeds, but the most welcome discovery was its superb all-round print quality. This is an excellent, inexpensive printer with reasonable running costs.



SPECIFICATIONS Colour laser, 600dpi, 25ppm mono/5ppm colour maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface. Part code C11C567001

HOTLIST MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL

HP Photosmart 2610

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £176 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.hp.co.uk



This MFP is a great all-rounder. Its scanner has no automatic document feeder, but it's fast and delivers good results. Text printing is quick, and affordable at 2.2p per page. Print and copy quality is excellent. At this price, its network port and built-in fax make it a bargain.



SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 2,400x4,800dpi scan resolution, USB, Wired 10/100 Ethernet and Pictbridge USB interfaces. Part code Q5542B

REVIEW COLOUR LASER MFP

HP Color LaserJet 2820

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £558 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.uk
DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

The price of colour laser printers has fallen dramatically in the past couple of years, but sadly multifunction peripherals (MFPs) haven't. HP is aiming to redress the balance with its Color LaserJet 2820, a printer, scanner and copier built on a four-pass colour laser engine.

Preparing the 2820 involves removing plenty of transit locks and inserting the imaging drum and toners, but we found this easy enough. HP's setup program successfully discovered the LaserJet over our network, but was slow to install files. It offers two options that require 75MB or 550MB of disk space, but no custom installation.

Setup creates two PCL drivers, one for colour and one for mono printing. We tried our print tests using both but mono print jobs were prone to brief pauses with the general-use driver. Using the mono driver doubled the speed to 15.2 pages per minute (ppm), which is adequate. However, colour printing with our 24-page test document managed just 2.4ppm.

Print quality was fine, but photos suffered from noticeable grid-like dithering. The printer failed to complete one of our standard photo tests and displayed an out-of-memory error message.

The connection we used seemed to affect scan times dramatically. Over USB, A4 previews took around 14 seconds; capturing a page at 300 dots per inch (dpi) took 36 seconds. When using the network connection, previews took twice as long, but the 300dpi scan was completed in just five seconds.



At higher resolutions, when we compared two 1,200dpi scans we noticed digital artefacts in the version made over a network connection. We wondered if the driver had simply enlarged the scan from a lower resolution preview. Both results were fine for office work, but we recommend using the USB connection for more creative needs.

Using the automatic document feeder, we were able to copy a 10-page mono document in just 52 seconds, or three minutes and five seconds in colour. Quality was OK, especially for mono text, which was legible for most than five generations.

This MFP is solid in most respects, but it is let down by its leisurely print performance and basic 125-sheet paper input tray. If you are prepared to pay £80 more, the Color LaserJet 2840 offers an extra 250-sheet cassette and fax capability.

Simon Handby

✓ Quick copying; reasonable running costs

✗ Limited paper handling; slow printing

SPECIFICATIONS 600dpi print resolution, 19ppm mono/4ppm colour maximum speed, 1,200x1,200 scan resolution, USB Hi-Speed and 10/100 Ethernet interfaces. **Part code** Q3948A

HOTLIST INKJET PRINTER

CANON PIXMA iP1500

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £37 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com
DETAILS www.canon.co.uk

The iP1500 is the baby of Canon's PIXMA range and does without the advanced paper handling of the more expensive models. It's a great little printer, though, producing excellent text and good photographs quickly. It's the best affordable inkjet we've tested, but like other budget devices it's not cheap to run.

SPECIFICATIONS Four-colour inkjet, 4,800x1,200dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **Part code** 9319A011AA


HOTLIST MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL

HP PSC 1215

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £59 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

This small and stylish multifunction peripheral would suit anyone who is short of money or space. It has a fairly basic driver and comes with limited but useful software. Copies, scans and prints are all very high-quality, but printing is fairly slow. Running costs are low at 2.7p per mono and 4.7p per colour page. Advanced users might not be satisfied by its simplicity, but beginners will love it.

SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 600x2,400dpi scan resolution, USB interface. **Part code** Q5894A



BYTE SIZE!



Our round-up of the best new gadgets and software

SOUNDGRAPH iMON VFD

RATING ★★

PRICE £93 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.quietpc.co.uk
DETAILS www.soundgraph.com

Soundgraph's iMON VFD comprises an infrared remote control and a smart-looking receiver, which mounts in a 5¼" bay. It takes its power from your PSU's ATX connector, but its adaptor works only with older 20-pin motherboards. It lets you control mouse movements and most media



programs using the 53-button remote. The basic functions work well, but when things get complex it's quicker to use the keyboard and mouse. The supplied Multi-Median software is clunky. The iMON is best used to control third-party multimedia applications. These aren't supplied, so the price is steep.

Simon Handby

ARTWIZZ PowerPhones and Splittercable

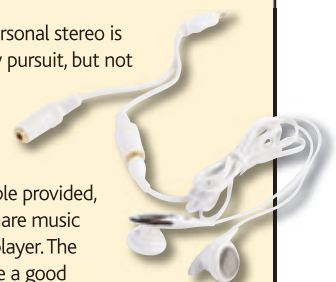
RATING ★★

PRICE £15 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.artwizz.com
DETAILS www.essentialipod.co.uk

Listening to a personal stereo is usually a solitary pursuit, but not if you use these earphones from Artwizz.

Using the short splitter cable provided, two users can share music from the same player. The PowerPhones are a good match for the white iPod, but the splitter cable is very light grey. The earphones have a 1.2m cable, which is enough to reach easily across the double seat of a bus or train. They sit comfortably in the ear and sound OK, but they lack bass. You can buy cheaper earphones that sound better, and splitter cables for under £2, so the price seems a bit high.



Simon Handby



REVIEW MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL

HP
PSC 1610

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £88 inc VAT

SUPPLIER HP 08452 704000

DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

HP's PSC 1610 is one of two new additions to the company's range of basic multifunction peripherals (MFPs). The 1610 is inexpensive and has a decent specification. HP says it can print up to 23 mono pages per minute (ppm) and 18 in colour.

Digital photographers are well catered for. There is a PictBridge interface and memory card slots that read seven common formats. The PSC 1610 has regular-capacity black and tri-colour cartridges, but you can replace the black with an optional photo supply for six-ink printing.

Unlike other products we've tested that use the newer HP cartridges, the 1610 won't accept the 800-sheet #339 black consumable. Its mono print costs of 2.8p per page are still good, but the larger cartridge would save half a penny per page and would print quicker due to its larger nozzle area.

Like the Color LaserJet reviewed on page 27, this MFP's setup program offers no custom option. The Express installation requires a whopping 365MB of disk space and full installation takes 780MB. We welcome the generous software bundle, but HP shouldn't force it on users.

Fortunately, there's little else to criticise about the PSC 1610. It was fast in our draft mono print tests, producing our 50-page document at an impressive 12.9ppm. Higher quality settings slowed the printer down, but it remained competitive. Print quality was fine on all of our plain paper tests.

Using the standard four-ink setup, our six 6x4" test photos printed in 19 minutes and 40 seconds.

Re-running the test using six inks reduced grain and improved fine detail, but the four-ink results were competent enough for occasional photo use. Despite the lack of a preview screen, we found it easy to make prints from memory cards using HP's proof sheet system.

The PSC 1610 scans at up to 1,200x4,800 dots per inch (dpi), and we were impressed by the sharp images captured in our tests. Previews and low-resolution scans were quite quick. However, capturing a 6x4" photograph at 1,200dpi took one minute and 27 seconds, which is a bit slow.

Given its memory card slots, six-ink capability and solid performance, the PSC 1610 is great value. It's also cheap to run, though it would be even more so if HP had allowed it to use the high-capacity black cartridge.

Simon Handby



Good value and performance



Won't accept high-capacity black cartridge; irritating installation process

SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 1,200x4,800dpi scan resolution, USB and PictBridge USB interfaces. **Part code** Q5587B

CHOOSING A...

LASER
PRINTER

Follow our step-by-step guide to identify your ideal laser

1

Prices for A4 laser printers start at around £80, with specs such as those in grey below. These models are fine for a Windows user who prints less than one packet of paper a month. Look for good print quality, flexible drivers and running costs below 2p per page. The printer should ideally hold paper clean and flat in a horizontal tray and allow manual feeding of headed paper and envelopes with no creasing.

2

You must spend more for a printer with the build quality and speed to cope with a heavy workload. Heavy users or small workgroups need up to 25 pages per minute (ppm), and whole departments need even more. Bulk printing demands costs of 1p per page or less.

3

Colour lasers are now available for less than £300, but at this price they will print colour far slower than mono. If colour speed is important, consider spending £500 or more to get a single-pass model.

4

Support for a printer language such as Printer Control Language (PCL) 6 or PostScript 3 means you can use the printer with any computer. Not all lasers print graphics well, but a 1,200dpi resolution helps. Colour lasers can print high-quality graphics, but should have at least 32MB of memory.

5

A network adaptor allows you to connect a printer to an Ethernet network, so all the network users can print to it directly. Smaller groups can use a PC to host and share any printer.

6

Duplex printing is a popular and increasingly affordable option. A scanner/fax unit turns your printer into a multifunction peripheral. Large groups should get multiple paper trays to deal with headed paper and other stationery.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE
(Recommended minimum in grey)

RESOLUTION: 600x600dpi

MEMORY: 8MB

SPEED: 12ppm

INTERFACES: USB

PAGES PER MONTH: 5,000

PAPER TRAYS: 150-sheet A4

OPTIONS:

HOTLIST INKJET PRINTER

HP
Photosmart 8150

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £124 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.hp.co.uk

This printer uses HP's new ink cartridges and comes with six-ink printing as standard. The optional black cartridge printed draft text at 17.5 ppm.

This printer excels with photos, though, and it produces natural-looking prints with accurate colours. Best of all, it is equipped with PictBridge and memory card support, and has superb direct printing features.

SPECIFICATIONS Six-colour inkjet, 1,200x4,800dpi maximum resolution, USB and PictBridge interfaces. **Part code** Q3399B



HOTLIST INKJET PRINTER

CANON
PIXMA iP3000

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £67 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.comDETAILS www.canon.co.uk

The iP3000 has two paper input trays, standard duplex printing and a PictBridge USB port. It prints borderless A4 photos and can even print on specially coated CDs. This is an impressive and unique set of abilities for the price, and yet it's also quick, cheap to run and has high print quality.

SPECIFICATIONS Four-colour inkjet, 1,200x4,800dpi maximum resolution, USB and PictBridge interfaces. **Part code** 9316A011AA

